

SPEAKERS' NOTES : No. 1

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(The following notes are only intended as a guide. They are prefaced by a guiding Index; with fairly full factual information and a number of examples. **DON'T USE ALL THESE FACTS AND EXAMPLES. MAKE A SELECTION AND USE LOCAL FACTS AND EXAMPLES.** Study the C.P. Memorandum, *Britain's Schools*, before attempting to speak on this subject.)

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1. INTRODUCTION—EDUCATION AND WAR v. FASCISM

Present war is a people's war.

The people's interests are at stake. Participation and leadership of the people plays a decisive role—not only for winning the war, but also for paving the way for a great advance when fascism has been destroyed.

More and more people—especially the Labour Movement—are realising they can determine their own future. More and more intervening in matters formerly regarded as only concern of rulers and Governments.

Similarly, the Labour Movement is voicing in no uncertain terms its opinion as to how the country's Educational system should be organised, seeing this not only as a matter vitally connected with winning the war, but as part of our struggle (together with our fight for the Beveridge Report, Catering Bill, etc.), for the new Britain that we shall build when victory has been won.

Everywhere where fascism has conquered, education has suffered. Books burnt, schools destroyed, teachers shot. Fascism can only live on blind prejudice, ignorance, servility. Fascism is the main enemy of education.

2. SOME IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS

(i) **Lack of School Accommodation Resulting in Overcrowding.** The maximum numbers in classes in all schools have been exceeded because in evacuable areas numbers of schools have been bombed

and many buildings are occupied by other services. In neutral areas there is overcrowding because of increased school population. In Middlesex in the year 1941-1942, the school population increased by 6,000 but no new buildings have been erected. Classes in many areas are over 50, and school halls are occupied by two classes. In parts of Harrow and Ruislip children cannot be admitted to school until they are six years of age. The position here will be relieved as the Board of Education has just approved the provision of prefabricated huts at three existing schools. Pressure must be exerted to procure more of these. In the Hayes area overcrowding could be eased by the completion of a school, Frogmore, requiring only the installation of heating, now used as a food store. In many places alternative accommodation could be found for the Services occupying the schools, and the schools made available for education.

(ii) **Lack of Teaching Staff.** Caused through (a) Men in forces; (b) No new men entrants to schools; (c) Wastage through retirement.

In the L.C.C. area 1,445 elementary and secondary school teachers are engaged in work other than teaching. Of these, 846 certificated teachers are serving in the forces. Many retired teachers could be called upon to return for duration. Steps should be taken to encourage more students to take up teaching and to give them adequate training.

(iii) **School Meals.** Rate of increase too slow. In L.C.C. only 26 per cent of the elementary school children and 29 per cent in Middlesex are having school dinners. The statement (*The Times*, May 18) of the President of the Board of Education should encourage local authorities to proceed more quickly, "To assist authorities in achieving this—a hot meal for every schoolchild—arrangements are being made for the Ministry of Works to undertake building work, including the adaptation of school buildings and the provision of sculleries and small kitchens where needed."

Poor quality of meals is inexcusable. Rations are ample for supplying good meals. In Middlesex where the price of 4d. per meal in Junior schools does not cover the cost, economy should be studied by avoiding waste by skilled buying, and by cooking, rather than by restricting the variety and quality of the food.

(iv) **Play Centres and Holiday Centres.** Position varies. Most authorities open these when the need is proved. In the L.C.C. there are 125 and others being opened where needed. In Middlesex the number is increasing, *e.g.*, in Harrow a year ago there was one only, and today there are 10, supplying breakfasts and teas and opening on Saturday mornings. One reason for this is that a small local committee has found out the needs and has made representations to the authority.

Holiday Centres. These appear to be most satisfactory where two conditions obtain. One is that where a play centre exists in term time the parents and children appreciate the service and welcome it in holidays. The other is that where teachers are consulted by the authority on the running of these, arrangements are generally satisfactory. In Middlesex mass meetings of teachers were held to discuss the scheme of holiday centres, and as a result small sub-committees of teachers were set up locally and these planned the whole of the centres and staffing. When it was found that lack of equipment was a handicap to the successful working of the centres, the authority made a grant of 10s. per head per annum, on average attendance. In Harrow, 13 centres were opened in the Christmas holiday with an average attendance of 782. In the L.C.C. area, 200 holiday clubs were planned for Easter holiday to cater for a possible 18,000 children.

(v) **Nursery Classes.** Nursery classes can only be established if extra accommodation is provided as infant schools are already full. War-time nurseries need to provide for children of women on night-shifts as has been done by the Hornsey Council in their Harringay nursery where they have beds for 12 children.

(vi) **Medical Services.** Routine inspections are often in arrears and therefore minor defects, *e.g.*, in eyes and posture, are not discovered—(new entrants to Harrow Boys' County School in September, 1941, did not get their medical inspection until Spring 1943).

The increased incidence of scabies and verminous condition among children needs increased number of school nurses. To meet the need the Middlesex County Council is now employing semi-trained assistants to work with the fully qualified school nurse.

General treatment clinics. Times open during the week varies. In L.C.C. and many boroughs in Greater London, they are open every day. In Middlesex once a week as a rule—(not enough).

(vii) **Youth and Juvenile Delinquency.** Too much emphasis is put on the increase in delinquency and not enough on preventive measures by providing attractive youth clubs. The increase when given as a percentage is large, but the actual incidence of delinquency is small, *e.g.*, in L.C.C. in the year 1942 the cases of girls of school age increased 121 per cent, but the actual numbers were 52 in the pre-war year and 115 in 1942, and that out of roughly 100,000 girls.

The discrimination against political youth organisations excludes those members from the participation in the funds and amenities controlled by the youth Committees and the Government must be approached with a view to lifting the ban. There should be larger grants for youth work in order to pay for Youth Organisers and premises.

Teachers and children have played an important part in the war. Not only have they shown great courage and fortitude during the "blitz" on London (even children receiving awards for bravery); but they have played a very big part in helping with the harvest, etc., and in salvage work.

3. THE FUTURE AND THE NEW EDUCATIONAL BILL

The working class has had to conduct a bitter struggle for better education for the past 150 years. A bitter fight took place around the 1935 Baldwin election campaign. But, after the Tories were put into office, they produced the 1936 Act which raised the school-leaving age to 15, *in words*, but made the loophole that any child who found "beneficial" employment at 14 was exempt from school.

The present fight for Educational Advance revolves around the forthcoming Educational Bill, within which the main fight is centring around DUAL CONTROL (the right of the Churches to maintain their own schools), EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY, AND SCHOOL-LEAVING AGE.

Labour Movement Proposals. A fierce struggle has already developed. The T.U.C. has already taken up a good progressive position, publishing a Memorandum in which its main ideas are put forward. Harold Clay's statement at the T.U.C.: "The interests of the child come first, and let no sectional or special interests stand in the way"—is an expression of the feeling that is widespread in the Labour Movement. The T.U.C. together with the W.E.A., the Co-operative Union and the N.U.T., have set

up a Joint Committee for Educational Advance with a fine 12-point programme

C.E.A. PROGRAMME

1. Raising of school-leaving age to 15 without exemption by the end of the war, and to 16 not more than three years later.
2. Free education under a single secondary code for all children after the primary stage.
3. Common standards of staffing, equipment and amenities in all schools.
4. Adequate provision of Nursery Schools and classes..
5. Free medical services and school meals.
6. Maintenance allowances for children in all post-primary schools.
7. Day continued education for all between 16 and 18.
8. Prohibition of employment below school-leaving age and its control by the education authorities up to the age of 18.
9. Licensing and inspection of any school outside the national system.
10. Unified system of administration to replace the dual control of schools.
11. Free access to universities and higher technical colleges for all who can benefit thereby.
12. Ample provision for adult education.

COMMUNIST PARTY POLICY

The Communist Party believes that only under Socialism will it be possible to give our children a full and complete education. (See "Education in the Soviet Union." Beatrix King. 6d. S.C.R. "Children in the Soviet Union." Beatrix King. 2d. R.T.D.). As steps towards this goal we support the Committee for Educational Advance in their programme as a basis around which the broad movement of the people for a progressive educational bill can be rallied. At the same time the Communist Party is putting forward its own Nine-Point programme. (See *Britain's Schools*, page 33.)

Note differences between our programme and that of the C.E.A., one of the chief of which is our clear-cut attitude to dual control, and religious instruction in schools.

Labour Party.—The Labour Party have also produced a 24-point programme, which covers, in greater detail, the main points in the C.E.A. programme. On the question of dual control, however, the Labour Party has refused to commit itself. It is necessary for Labour organisations to urge the Labour Party that the interests of the children, and the future of our educational system requires from them a clear stand on this vital question.

4. DUAL CONTROL

Position in London.—Religious bodies, and especially the Roman Catholic hierarchy, are conducting a bitter battle to retain a hold over their own schools.

In London, in the L.C.C. area, there are 892 elementary schools. Of these, 538 are council schools, catering for 76 per cent of the children, and 354 are non-provided (i.e., Church) schools, catering for 24 per cent. The Churches are responsible financially only for the fabric of the school buildings (the *School-master*, 13/5/43, calculates roughly 5 per cent of cost). But the State, which in the long run means the entire population, contributes 95 per cent of the cost, but has little say in the control of these schools. Denominational teaching is taught, and appointments of teachers are made by the Managers of the schools, and not by the Local Education Authority. Church Schools cannot be re-organised into Junior and Senior Schools, without the consent of the denomination.

Reactionary Policies.—Moves are afoot by certain Church interests, not only to maintain their hold on their existing schools, but to obtain increased finance from the State, and, most important, to gain power in the Council schools by insisting that religious instruction be given in all schools, that it be a qualifying subject for Teachers' Certificate, and that religious instruction be subject to inspection by His Majesty's Inspectors or other duly authorised persons.

Daily Mail (2/4/43) calls C.E.A. Memorandum "A symptom of something rotten in our foundations."

The attitude taken by reactionary Catholic interests (who have a reactionary record in relation to the Soviet Union, Spain, Poland, and other questions), is made clear in the statement issued by the Roman Catholics Bishops of England and Wales, and published in *The Times*, 8/5/43. "We shall not give up our schools, no matter what sacrifice we may be called upon to make for them. We shall hold on to them."

At the same time, however, we should realise that this is not the viewpoint of all Catholics. Many of them agree with the pro-Soviet utterances of the late Cardinal Hinsley, and are ready, if approached, to associate themselves with the progressive movement of the people for social and economic advance.

Anglican and Free Church.—The statement issued by the Anglican and Free Churches, in the name of the Archbishop of Canterbury and others, takes a far more reasonable standpoint than the declaration of the Roman Catholic Bishops.

"We want to say now that we eagerly desire to see carried into law a truly effective educational reform, creating something like

equality of educational opportunities for all. We trust that if differences arise between the religious bodies they will be confined to a small area of the bill and will not be such as to impede the educational advance so urgently needed for the general welfare." (*Manchester Guardian*, 10/5/43.)

Our Attitude.—The fight over dual control should not be looked upon as a religious question. The point is that educational advance requires a unified system for the whole country, in which no sectional interests are allowed to hamper the general advance.
(See also *Britain's Schools*, pages 20-21.)

5. EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND SCHOOL-LEAVING AGE

Our educational system contains the beginnings of much that is good and capable of developing towards a democratic system of education for the people. At the same time, it contains much that belongs to the past and no longer satisfies the needs of present-day life.

The question of equal opportunity and school-leaving age raises the whole question of the public schools. A fierce struggle is developing around this question, with which is associated the demand for raising the school-leaving age to 16, and provision for Secondary School education for all.

Less than 10 per cent of school children get to Secondary or Public Schools. Class privilege prevails throughout our educational system. Certain reactionary forces, such as those who opposed the Beveridge Report and the Catering Bill, are rallying their forces in defence of the Public Schools.

Labour and Progressive Opinion.—The Trades Union Congress has given a strong lead on this question, its Memorandum stating: "Subject to the exceptions noted below, there would appear to be no reason for the continued existence of private schools. The great majority of these schools are based on class distinctions, and in so far as that is their only claim to existence, they should be abolished."

A group of University professors have also called for the full incorporation of our Public Schools into a unified system of secondary education.

The L.C.C. Labour Party group has also made it clear that in its opinion "Public schools as at present constituted are both socially and educationally undesirable. They should have no place of privilege in the educational world of to-morrow." The L.C.C. itself has adopted the report of its sub-committee, which declares that, 'the in-

dependent public day and boarding schools are, in the widest sense, educationally undesirable."

Reactionary Propaganda.—These expressions from the Labour and progressive movement have naturally brought forth a barrage of counter propaganda by reactionary forces. The *Daily Telegraph*, as ever in the forefront of reaction, has published a number of letters attacking the L.C.C. for its attitude, one letter appearing under the headline: "Snobbishness" of L.C.C., another under "Envy of the Public School." Similarly, Candidus, writing in the *Daily Sketch*, makes an attack on the L.C.C. for its stand, and defends the public schools. Mr. John Murray, Principal of University College, Exeter, likewise defended the public school system at the annual conference of the Incorporated Association of Headmasters in London (Jan., 1943), making the astounding statement that "danger . . . threatens . . . from an exaggerated and morbid view of the place of equality in the democratic ideal."

The main line of the reactionaries on the question of the public schools is to plead for more money in exchange for the offer of a few scholarships for elementary school children. This would mean giving public money but having no public control. It would also mean taking away a few of the most intelligent working-class children from their environment and educating them to be hangers-on of the ruling class.

There are already indications that the Government is retreating before reactionary pressure. At the recent N.U.T. Conference the teachers' leadership failed to make a clear cut stand on the question of Dual Control. There is a danger of further concessions being accepted, and of the strong T.U.C. stand being weakened.

6. WHAT MUST BE DONE.

1. Ensure that your local schools are being run satisfactorily. (Good school meals provided, sufficient teaching staff, proper medical facilities, etc.)
2. Invite a speaker from the N.U.T. or Communist Party to address your organisation on Education.
3. Get your Trades Council, together with all Labour organisations, factories, parents, teachers and Educational bodies, to organise a local conference, which will present demands to the local educational committee.
4. Get your organisation to pass a resolution in support of the C.E.A. programme. Send a copy of this resolution to the C.E.A. and a copy to the Minister for Education.